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TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [TW](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: TAIWAN'S WHO BID AND CROSS-
STRAIT RELATIONS

1. Summary: As Taiwan dailies continued to cover Taiwan's failure to join the assembly of the World Health Organization (WHO) for nine consecutive years May 18, the focus has shifted to Beijing's attempt to block the revisions of the International Health Regulations and President Chen Shui-bian's comments on Beijing's move. A page-two news story of the pro-independence "Liberty Times," Taiwan's biggest daily, headlined: "Bian criticized Lien and Soong for denying Taiwan's sovereignty in China." The sub-headline added: "[Chen] said Chinese Health Minister Gao Qiang's statement has proved that Lien's and Soong's remarks and behaviors in China were exactly why China suppressed Taiwan at the WHO. KMT and PFP refuted [Chen's remarks and] criticized Bian for shirking his responsibility because of his incompetence with regard to cross-strait policy." The front-page story of the pro-independence "Taiwan Daily" and the page-three news story of the pro-unification "United Daily News" all had similar reports. The "Liberty Times" reported on its second page that Washington urged the WHO to contact Taiwan officials about Taiwan's WHO bid, and the "China Times" printed on its page two that "The health ministers of Taiwan and the United States will meet today."

2. Several newspapers editorialized today on Taiwan's failure to join the WHO for nine consecutive years. The "Liberty Times" editorial said China's move to block Taiwan's WHO bid may be seen as positive for Taiwan since the island has finally seen through China's scam. A "China Times" editorial urged Taiwan to use flexible and smart strategies to create more strength and resources for the island and thereby garner international support for its bid to join the WHO. A limited-circulation, pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" editorial called WHO bowed before China's pressure again, while a limited-circulation, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" editorial said China has adopted a new strategy to pressure Taipei to accept the one China tenet. A "Taipei Times" commentary on current cross-strait relations said Washington and Beijing are now competing for influence over Taiwan. End summary.

A) "China Cheats and Fools Lien and Soong? Political Hoax Appears Again"

The pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 800,000] editorialized (5/18):

". Taiwan's has failed again with regard to its efforts to become an observer at the Assembly of the World Health Organization. Taiwan people need not feel disheartened about such a development. Instead, they should be happy that following the wave of blind China fever on the island, which was sparked by [KMT Chairman] Lien Chan's and [PFP Chairman] James Soong's recent China trips and which suppressed all rational thinking and obscured the route to upholding Taiwan's sovereignty and identity, China's barbarous move to invalidate the communique it signed with Lien and Soong came in time to unveil the false impression of peace that China has recently created. Beijing's move has also exposed its lies about its willingness to assist Taiwan's bid to join the international community and allowed most Taiwan people to see clearly the true face of China. Just as President Chen Shui-bian has pointed out, Lien's and Soong's China trips have failed to obtain more space for Taiwan to maneuver in the international community. China, on the contrary, has not only failed to give Taiwan more room in the international community but has also belittled, marginalized and localized Taiwan. It is thus believed that Chen, given such an understanding, will surely modify the erroneous route he adopted after his meeting with Soong [in February] and will try harder to consolidate and strengthen Taiwan's sovereignty and

identity. Judged from this perspective, China's obstruction of Taiwan's bid to join the WHA this time can be viewed as a gain for Taiwan as Taiwan has seen through Beijing's scam."

B) "Following the Ninth Failure of [Taiwan's] Bid to Join the WHO"

The centrist, pro-status quo "China Times" [circulation: 600,000] observed in an editorial (5/18):

". As expected, Beijing has again strongly blocked the [WHO's] passage of the International Health Regulations (IHR) and attempted to modify the contents of IHR. In other words, even though Beijing appeared to speak nice words and act in a flexible manner [toward Taiwan], it was relentless in its move to thwart Taiwan's space in the international community. [For Taiwan], even though its efforts to seek dignity in international society can become an issue on the agenda of its talks with Beijing, to use flexible and smart strategies to create Taiwan's strength and resources and thereby garner international support is actually the best bargaining chip that Taiwan can use in cross-Strait talks as well as for its existence and development."

C) "The WHO Bows before China Again"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] commented in an editorial (5/18):

"Pundits who thought the trips to China by Chinese Nationalist Party Chairman (KMT) Lien Chan and People First Party Chairman James Soong would elicit a more civilized form of behavior from Beijing were fooling themselves. Beijing has once again blocked Taipei's application to join the World Health Organization (WHO), and thus China's 'united front' strategy and hypocrisy in creating the illusion of 'peaceful intentions' for international consumption is plain to see. Equally obvious is Beijing's lust for Taiwan's territory at the expense of the health and security of Taiwanese people. .

"China's tactics prove that the agreements Hu reached with Lien and Soong - both of whom long for unification - are worth less than the paper on which they are printed. Taiwan's experience on this attempt to attend the WHA should show simple-minded officials and politicians who insist on building mechanisms of mutual trust that there is no trust to be found from Beijing, and that anyone who deals with China in any capacity should be wary and prepare for some disappointing outcomes. ."

D) "New PRC Strategy to Pressure Taipei to Take One China Tenet"

Editorial of the conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" [circulation: 30,000] wrote (5/18):

"This year, Taiwan failed again in its annual bid to join the World Health Organization (WHO), including an unsuccessful attempt to become an observer at the body's highest decision making organ, the assembly. But events regarding Taiwan's latest participation efforts took a sharp turn, posing a new challenge for Taipei. .

"According to the conclusions Beijing has reached with the WHO, Taipei must apply for admission as part of China, using the name of 'Taiwan, China.' Obviously, this name arrangement is unacceptable to us, as it simply does not correspond with Taiwan's longstanding political status quo. Should we accept the name designation, it will deeply degrade Taiwan's standing and gravely damage its interests.

"The membership issue has once again demonstrated the need for the administration of President Chen Shui-bian to put aside its political ideology and enter into talks with Beijing. .

"It appears very likely that Beijing may use the new arrangements with the WHO as a formula for Taiwan's entry in the future into other world organizations, in which statehood is required for membership. Taiwan may choose not to accept this model, if it prefers to continuously stay outside. But the price will be highly damaging. Taiwan must continue to suffer being isolated internationally. And its companies will remain denied convenient access to the world's largest market because of political feuds that make normalization of economic relations impossible."

E) "US Flails as Hu Jintao Gains the Upper Hand"

Lai I-chung, Director of Foreign Policy Studies at the Taiwan Thinktank, noted in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] (5/18):

"The fuss stirred up by the talks that Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) Chairman Lien Chan and People First Party Chairman James Soong held with Chinese President Hu Jintao has finally settled down. However, as the dust clears we can perceive a major change in the dynamics between China, Taiwan and the US regarding the Taiwan Strait.

"Hu has managed to take the upper hand in cross-strait issues from the US. Washington, whose role no longer appears quite as dominant as it was, is now vying with Beijing for influence over Taiwan. In addition, the US' ability to define the nature of the status quo in the Taiwan Strait is beginning to slip. .

"In point of fact, the US should have paid more attention to these talks [i.e. Lien-Hu talks and Soong-Hu talks] and not be suckered into thinking they were a precursor for talks between Hu and President Chen Shui-bian.

"The US should have insisted that the process be peaceful and cautioned that its results conform to the wishes of the Taiwanese people. If it had done so, Washington would still have been able to call the shots, define the bottom line, and have some control over how the situation develops.

"This lack of understanding caused US statements prior to the visits to be interpreted as a blank check for Lien and Soong to say whatever they wanted in China. The US' emphasis was on paving the way for a meeting between Chen and Hu, but after Lien started making public statements in China, Washington belatedly realized that things were out of control.

"Washington's call for a dialogue between Chen and Hu are now too late. These would simply be regarded as yet another meeting between political parties. The ability of the US to have a decisive influence on the current cross-strait situation has therefore been greatly diminished by Hu's political tactics to sow dissent among political parties in Taiwan. .

"With China and the US competing for influence over Taiwan, it is likely that a pro-China and pro-US camp will emerge in response. . this will be one of the greatest challenges that Taiwan's democracy has ever faced."

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